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**How to maintain contact with absent employees**

It is a joint responsibility between the manager and the member of staff to keep in touch during a period of sickness absence.

Keeping in touch can help reduce anxieties that the individual has about returning to work, keep the member of staff up to date on any important workplace developments, and in due course, plan for and support their return to work.

For longer or planned periods of absence, for example an operation and recovery period, it is a good idea to agree with the member of staff method and frequency of contact.

Contact can take place at the University, by phone or email, through a home visit or at a mutually convenient location. For face to face meetings, be aware that the individual may be more comfortable to have a friend or family member with them.

It is good practice to:

* Discuss the reason for the absence and any current information about prognosis, potential return date and support that may be required to facilitate this.
* Check with the member of staff if they want to receive updates about work or the University while they are away from work.
* Ask the individual if there is anything that they need from you or their manager.
* Keep some brief notes of any discussions.
* Signpost sources of support, such as the University counseling service if appropriate.
* Agree when to next make contact or meet.

There are no specific rules regarding how often contact should be made; this will depend on the circumstances and the nature of the absence. There may be occasions where too much contact is unhelpful, for example in the case of stress related absence. However, having no contact at all can be stressful in itself, and can make returning to work daunting. Take advice from HR on how often to keep in touch in the circumstances.